



Senate Committee on Education

RE: Support for SB 1098

March 3, 2025

Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Amanda Orozco, and I serve as the Policy Coordinator at Unite Oregon. Our organization advocates for all 45,000 members of our organization who consist of immigrants, refugees, people of color, people experiencing poverty, and rural communities across the state. Today, I am testifying in strong support of SB 1098, which ensures that all students, regardless of background, have access to diverse and representative materials in their classrooms and school libraries.

We are witnessing a dangerous trend across the country, with book bans targeting stories that center LGBTQIA2S+ communities, Black and Indigenous people, and other communities of color. Just recently, the Trump administration moved to ban certain books from schools operated by the Department of Defense, including titles that promote self-acceptance and diversity. These actions reflect a larger effort to erase the voices and histories of marginalized communities from our education system.

Oregon has the opportunity, and the responsibility, to ensure that this kind of censorship does not take hold in our state. SB 1098 establishes a statewide standard that protects students' right to see themselves represented in literature, while also preserving access to books that encourage critical thinking and a broader understanding of the world. The bill ensures that no book can be removed simply because it reflects diverse identities or perspectives, and it upholds the principles of inclusion and educational freedom.

As an organization that works directly with communities impacted by systemic barriers, we know that representation in education matters. When students have access to books that reflect their own stories, they feel valued, empowered, and engaged in learning. Likewise, when students read about experiences different from their own, they develop empathy and a deeper understanding of the world around them.

SB 1098 does not limit any parent's right to guide their own child's reading choices. Rather, it ensures that all families have the freedom to access books that reflect a wide range of voices and lived experiences. This bill is about protecting the right to learn, not restricting it.

We cannot allow Oregon to follow the path of censorship that we are seeing unfold in other states. Instead, we must take proactive steps to protect the rights of students and uphold our commitment to equity and inclusion in education. For these reasons, Unite Oregon urges you to vote YES on SB 1098.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Amanda Orozco**

Policy Coordinator, Unite Oregon